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Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

INSIDE TRACKS

The Newsletter of Region One

Volume 7, No. 4

Fall 1997

Hunters: Note Changes in Deer Hunting Regulations

The past winter's heavy snows came early and stayed late and were the worst on record in northwest Montana. Winter kill of deer was much higher than normal in most areas. Because of these factors, the FWP Commission took action and set emergency regulations for Region One.

Hunters should note that these are changes made after the standard hunting regulations were printed

Please help the deer herds in northwest Montana by following these emergency regulations! ☺



A HAPPY HUNTER poses with her fine Whitetail buck at the Swan Valley check station. Hunters need to be aware of emergency changes made in deer hunting regulations for 1997.

ADDENDUM

to 1997 Montana Big Game Hunting Regulations

Deer Hunting Regulation Changes

⇒ ---Hunting Districts 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 110, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 130, 132, 140, & 141---

Change: Hunting for either-sex white-tailed deer will be allowed only during the first week of the 1997 season. The general season will be as follows:
Oct. 26 - Nov. 2 Antlered Buck Mule Deer or Either Sex Whitetail
Nov. 3 - Nov. 30 Antlered Buck, Either Species
(Refer to pages 19-21 of the 1997 Big Game Hunting Regulations)

Also refer to the addendum for changes in Whitetail B licenses. Addendums are available at all license agents and FWP offices.

IN THIS ISSUE

- CHANGES IN DEER HUNTING REGULATIONS
- LINCOLN COUNTY HOSTS ADVANCED HUNTER ED.
- LOCAL SHOOTING CLUBS SUPPORT HUNTER ED.
- JR. HUNTER ED. INSTRUCTOR GUEST OF NRA IN D.C.
- BLACK BEAR COMMITTEE RELEASES RECOMMENDATIONS
- LETTERS AND ESSAYS
- WILDLIFE MITIGATION UPDATE
- FISHERIES MITIGATION UPDATE
- HOOKED ON FISHING PROGRAM ADOPTED BY 29 SCHOOL CLASSES

Lincoln County Hosts Advanced Hunter Ed. Course

With the cooperation of Libby Rod and Gun Club, FWP Commissioner Charlie Decker, and the Libby Community, the 1997 Advanced Hunter Education Day Camp was another big success. The camp is designed for boys and girls age 12-14 who have already completed the standard Hunter Education Course.

The advanced course is the brain-child of FWP Commissioner Charlie Decker of Libby. It began as a two-day overnight event and has now evolved into an intensive, one-day course.

The advanced course features seven stations where students receive detailed instruction on shooting, hunter ethics, survival, and other topics. Students spend 12 hours at the Fawn Creek Campground taking part in (Cont. on Page 2)



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Lincoln County Hosts Advanced Hunter Ed. Course

(Cont. from Page 1)

instruction, lunch, and a special barbecue featuring a number of presentations.

A number of instructors made the event fun and informative for the students. Stations and instructors included:

Rifle Shooting: Don Clark, Ray Bannon, Frank Sichting



USING BOW AND ARROW. Rich Hjort passes along his extensive knowledge about archery techniques at the archery station.

Hunter Ethics: Dave Helmdrick, Chris Ralph, Steve Anderson

Black Powder: Dave Windom

Bow: Rich Hjort, Joe Ricke, Kurt Spencer

Survival: David Thompson Search and Rescue, Libby

Map and Compass: Jeremy Rank, Mike Canavan

Wildlife: Wayne Kasworm, John Fraley

Linda Alkire took care of food preparation; Frank Sichting cooked the burgers. Businesses and individuals who contributed included: Timberline Auto, Snyders Bread, Empire Foods, Rosauers, Rob Uithof, Libby Sports, Treasure Mountain Casino, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and Terry Andreeson.

Tom Horelick of the Libby Rod and Gun Club was the overall coordinator. "Businesses and individuals have been incredibly supportive," Horelick said. "They recognize the value of responsible hunting. It's hit a nerve with a lot of people."



PRIZES. The team of Lindsay Hjort, Teela Brown, Jaimee Winslow, Shanelle Hogan, and Lydia Poppen display the hip packs they won for finishing first in the evening "Jeopardy game," which tests the students' level of learning from the day's activities.



POWDER PRACTICE. (above) Dave Windom instructs a student at the black powder station



STUDENTS COMPARE deer jaws (left) with examples on a jaw board to determine deer age.

SIGHTING IN. Don Clark looks on as a student prepares to fire a .22-.250 rifle (right).



THE WINNER. David Boren won the drawing for a stainless steel .22 rifle donated by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. Tom Horelick of the Libby Rod and Gun Club (left) and FWP Commissioner Charlie Decker help him celebrate.



Local Shooting Clubs Support Hunter Education

by Dale Sommerfield
Region One Citizen Advisor and
Hunter Education Instructor

Region One Hunter Education instructors are extremely lucky to have the support of local shooting clubs. These clubs cooperate with regional instructors for the use of their indoor and outdoor ranges in the field course part of Hunter Education. Many of these clubs also help out with donations of equipment and range instructors, and most of them also hold hunter sight-in days each year before the start of the hunting season. Let's take a tour of the region and see the resources that are available to Hunter Education programs across northwest Montana. (Listed at the end of each club are addresses or phone numbers for membership information.)

Let's start in the north valley where the Columbia Falls and Whitefish ranges have used the indoor range of the Whitefish Rifle and Pistol club for 5 years. They set up an outdoor woods walk and then do an extensively instructed small caliber indoor live fire. (Whitefish Rifle and Pistol Club, P.O. Box 1268, Whitefish MT 59937.)

Paul Murphy, the lead instructor for Columbia Falls, has been working hard to get the North Valley Sportsman's Club's new range off the ground and into action at their location north of the Columbia Falls Aluminum Plant. They may eventually have the facilities to set up their own field course at this location. (Paul Murphy, 892-4006.)

Now, if we move northwest to Eureka, we find the Tobacco Valley Rod and Gun Club donating their range facilities to the Eureka Hunter Education classes where they shoot rifle and shotgun and then do a woods walk on the same site. (Pat Keller, 296-3479.)

Moving south to Libby we'll see how the Libby Rod and Gun Club supports both the regular Hunter Education classes and also the Advanced Hunter Education course held at Fawn Creek Campground every year. At this Ad-

vanced Course they provide equipment and manpower for a grueling one-day course that provides .22 live fire, large rifle, muzzle loader rifle, wildlife management, outdoor survival and other activities. Ask FWP Commissioner Charlie Decker (293-6465) for more information. Tom Horelick (293-7205) of the Libby Rod and Gun Club coordinates the event.

If we drive west a short distance, we'll find Pat Savage, the lead instructor in Troy, who says he feels lucky to have an indoor range in town where he can take his students to do a live fire exercise. His class then has to get permission from a local landowner to do a walk-through exercise on his property. Pat also receives equipment and support from the Bull Lake Rod and Gun

Smith take their students out for live fire and a walk-through exercise.

Once in the Mission Valley we're informed that the Mission Valley Shooting Club is getting their range in order, and they hope to attract the Charlo, Ronan, Polson and St. Ignatius instructors to their range for a combination walk-through and live fire exercise. Students would be assigned a rifle and would move from shooting station to shooting station, doing their walk-through components in between. The new range has 10 covered shooting benches with a 100 and 200 yard target distance. Also on the range is a 10 point pistol range. The range is located on Leighton Road, northwest of Ronan. For information call Bill Edelman, 676-2141, Frank Serfoss, 676-0461, or see Dan Tolke at Ronan Sports and Western.

Just north to

BIGFORK LEAD INSTRUCTOR
Jon Cuthbertson instructs a Hunter Education student at the Bigfork Rod & Gun Club Range. Shooting clubs around the region support local Hunter Education programs.

Polson we'll find an effective group of people called Polson Outdoors, Inc. This is a sports oriented group that works on various community projects, and they provide instructor support for local Hunter Education courses. (Bill Corrigan, 883-6895.)

Back up the east side of Flathead to Bigfork, we'll see where the Bigfork Rod and Gun Club turns over the use of their range to the Bigfork Hunter Education program twice a year. They do an outdoor woods walk and then shoot at outdoor covered benches for live fire exercises. Instructor support and equipment is also provided by the club. (Ann Hewitt, 837-5158.)

Last but not least, we make it to Kalispell, where the outdoor field course is held at the Clay Target Shooting Club range located between Kalispell and Whitefish. The club provides clay targets and the use of their range. On adjoining property the Northwest Montana Arms Collectors donates the use of their indoor range and facilities where Hunter Education students do live fire .22 exercises. They also do live fire muzzle-loader rifle shooting and a woods walk on State land next door. (Clay Target Club-Rick Clay, 752-4444; NMAC-Les Bauska, 752-7706, or Paul Willis, 755-3980.)



club. (Walter Stephenson, 295-4790.)

We'll now head south on the Bull Lake road to Noxon where the Trout Creek Hunter Education program is lucky to have the support of the Noxon Rod and Gun Club. They donate their indoor facilities for a .22 live fire exercise where guns, ammo and certified instructors are all provided. Their range also includes a 200 yard rifle range and a shotgun range. (Jim Mershon, 827-4390.)

Moving east on Highway 200 to Plains, Phil Crismore has informed us that the Eastern Sanders County Sportsman's Club is taking over the Hicks Road rifle range. They'll be supporting their community with the use of this range and the surrounding area for a woods walk. (Fred Cavill, 826-3457.)

Over the hill on the way to the Mission Valley, we find that the city of Hot Springs has taken control of the local outdoor rifle range. Here, on this outdoor range, Don Woods and Don

Kalispell Area Jr. Hunter Ed. Instructor Guest of NRA in Washington, D.C.

by Bobbi Burgess

Note: Bobbi Burgess has been an outstanding Junior Instructor in the Kalispell area Hunter Education Program for five years.

There I was in Washington, D.C., sitting in the Dulles Airport, waiting for a bright sign or tee-shirt that said NRA Y.E.S. Program. It seemed that no-one was going to come. I thought to myself, "They forgot me; here I am, all alone in the big city, in an airport bigger than the whole town I live in." That was just the beginning of one of the most enlightening and exciting weeks of my life.

I was one of 30 high school students from the United States and Mexico selected to take part in the NRA's second annual "Youth Education Summit" (Y.E.S.) June 24-29. Selections were based on a comprehensive application, a written essay on the Second Amendment, at least three personal references, as well as academic transcripts and records.

Starting in fifth grade, I became active in Hunter Education as an assistant instructor. Twice a year my father and I have taken part in teaching the program in Kalispell. Recently

my sister has joined us, and it is very much a family project. Since then I have taken part in many leadership programs and activities such as U p w a r d Bound, a college prep program.



Through Hunter Education I began to become more and more aware of the importance of laws and ethics in fire-arm safety and use. It wasn't until I took part in the Y.E.S. program that I realized how important it is to preserve my Second Amendment Rights, OR that I can make a difference.

If not for the Second Amendment in its fullest, an important part of our heritage could be seriously affected, if not totally taken away. As a fourth generation Montanan, I have grown up in a family that appreciates the land, its many resources and what it has meant to my family. Some of my favorite family memories include not

only camping and hiking, but also harvesting wild game in the fall for the freezer. It is much more than time in the woods with Dad. It also includes important lessons in morals, ethics and common sense that, learned any other way, would not be the same.

While in Washington D.C., I had the opportunity to meet and visit with many people working to preserve our Constitutional rights. NRA President, Marion Hammer, 1993 Olympic Gold Medalist in competitive shooting sports, Launi Meili, and Montana's State representative, Rick Hill, just to name a few.

The fact that these busy people took the time to help me further understand what's going on in the government process and how that could affect not only me but further generations of Montanans, impressed me. They have further stimulated me to become more involved in the political process, especially regarding our Second Amendment rights, not only here in Montana but throughout the United States.

Special thanks to Dan Atkinson, Lead Hunter Education Instructor, John Fraley, Fish Wildlife & Parks, and others. Without their help and support I would not have had this wonderful experience. ♣

Letters of Praise for Hunter Education

Dear FWP,

Just a note to tell you how terrific this program is. It goes well beyond "Hunting" education. As a 55 year old adult coming from a background that did not afford itself experiences such as hunting, I decided to take hold of that which I have missed and not let age be a deterring factor.

I gained much knowledge and encouragement, but to see the young people grow before your eyes in conduct, respect, and acceptance of responsibility in such a short period says more than I can express in gratitude for this program, and the many great instructors, including the Jr. instructors who all gave so many hours to this worthwhile program. The field training was excellent and done in such a fashion that it pulled the classroom sessions and any prior reading altogether for us the students, which is so helpful since so many of us learn in many different ways.

Once again, the results I'm sure makes hunting safer, but it goes far beyond hunting. I thank you.

Elaine Boddington, Kalispell

Dear FWP,

My husband and I chose to retire in Montana from southern Idaho in 1996. I chose to take the Montana Hunter Education course for several reasons:

1. I am new to Montana and Montana laws.
2. I wanted to be support to another retired female who is a new hunter.
3. Though I have hunted since I was a teen, I have never taken hunter safety or any similar class.

The value and depth of the course greatly surpassed my expectations. Everyone involved in this Montana Hunter Education program is to be commended for their time, effort and expertise. I believe it should be a required course for everyone. I also believe those 12, 13, and 14 years old would do well to have a refresher when they become adults and comprehend things on an adult level. Handling a gun is no minor thing.

I can think of only one suggestion. I did not hear any mention of a gun properly fitting the shooter. Being 5 feet, I have found that I would not have very good control of a gun that was not fitted to my size. We have guidelines to fit for skis, why not guns.

Please continue to support and fund this vital program to the max. Lives depend on it.

Alice Cochrane, Kalispell

Black Bear Committee Releases Recommendations

A citizen committee charged with recommending measures to improve black bear hunting regulations in northwest Montana has finished its work. The Committee has released a report outlining six major recommendations.

The recommendations were designed to reduce the number of young female black bears harvested and reduce the number of bears harvested illegally. The recommended steps include:

Remove black bear license from the resident sportsman license—This step would reduce the opportunistic harvest of young bears and improve the accuracy of harvest and hunter estimates.

Establish a cutoff date for license purchase—This action would reduce incidental take of young bears and reduce tagging violations.

Require a hide tag—This would reduce non-compliance with the bear harvest reporting requirement and allow for the collection of more complete harvest and age data.

Increase cost of bear licenses—Increasing license costs to comparable levels of other western states would reduce the influx of nonresident hunters to Montana.

Increase law enforcement—Increased warden patrols would increase compliance for the mandatory turn-in of hide and skull for inspection.

Increase education of hunters—Fewer mistakes would be made by hunters if they were more aware of bear identification and ways of selecting older, larger bears.

Region One Supervisor Dan Vincent praised the Committee for its timely work. The Committee considered dozens of issues and proposals before deciding on the six recommendations. The Committee included: Arlie Burk, Eureka; Dale Williams, Kalispell; Cecil Noble, Kalispell; Gerry

Mercer, Libby; Bruce Babcock, Kalispell, Dave Britton, Noxon. All of these committee members are avid and experienced bear hunters. FWP representatives included Wildlife Biologist Jerry Brown of Libby, and Wildlife Manager Harvey Nyberg.

FWP and the FWP Commission will carefully consider these recommendations during the upcoming 1998/99 season setting process. Some of the changes will require legislation, others can be made by Commission action.

If you have questions or comments on the recommendations, or if you'd like a copy of the complete report, call FWP at 752-5501. ☎



Youth Essays — What Hunting Means to Me

Flathead Wildlife, Inc., and Snappy Sport Senter sponsored an essay contest, "What Hunting Means to Me" for 11-14 year olds. Over 200 entries were received and were judged by a 5-person expert panel. Here are some of the winning essays. FWP congratulates these young authors and their parents

Jamison Smith - 11.

Hunting to me is a chance to get out in the woods, to take part in hunting history, to be with friends and family. It's a chance to have fun. Hunting is a chance to be with my dad, my brothers, and my cousins.

Hunting is a tradition in my family. My family is a long list of hunters. After years of hearing all their hunting stories, finally it's my turn to a part of it all!

Jonas Nichols - 12.

Hunting to me is a time of honoring family tradition. It is a time to share the stories of hunting trips gone by.

Being Native American has taught me to use every part of the animal effectively. My culture has taught me also to make a clean kill and how to use the environment without causing upset in the balanced habitat.

My father has given me the will to hunt for the meat, not just the sport. Hunting is a necessity when your family depends on the meat supply for the winter months. I enjoy the outdoors and the gifts we take from mother nature. I am truly thankful that God gave us this land and its bounties to use in this lifetime. That's what hunting means to me.

Kyle Smalley - 13.

To me hunting is a chance to be outdoors and enjoy nature. It is seeing the leaves fall and the birds fly south. Hunting is also a good time with my dad and a great snack of jerky later.

My first hunting experience was with a gun cut out of a pine board and a desire for a bear rug. I was still in my yard when I gave up on the bear. I was four. I now think and smile of that experience.

Hunting is stalking, shooting, and safety. It is knowing the animal, its tracks and marks. It is lots of practice shots. Hunting isn't just the hunt, but the practice of safety and skill. There are already too many unsafe hunters, and I don't want to be one.

Hunting is more than just a sport.

Libby Dam Wildlife Mitigation Update

Over the last 10 years, the Kootenai National Forest has enhanced over 10,000 acres to help mitigate for the nearly 29,000 acres of wildlife habitat that were flooded when Lake Koocanusa was filled in 1974. Habitat enhancement has occurred on the winter and spring ranges on either side of Lake Koocanusa within the Rexford and Libby Ranger Districts. Mitigation work on the Kootenai National Forest is guided by the Kootenai River Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Project Management Plan which outlined enhancement activities from 1990 through 1999.

Prescribed Burns

We had a busy season along the shores of Lake Koocanusa in 1997. After the wet spring of 1996 which allowed almost no prescribed fire, 1997 provided ample opportunities to work through a good portion of the backlog of scheduled burns. Between the Rexford and Libby Ranger Districts, there was a little over 2,100 acres of winter range that was enhanced through either the application of select timber harvest or slashing of small, unmerchantable timber followed by treatment with prescribed fire. Some of this prescribed burning was accomplished in partnership with the District's fuels management program. This allowed for both the treatment of larger blocks of land, as well as a reduction in costs to both programs.

Most of the burning operations take place in the spring of the year to take advantage of safer burning conditions. There are many advantages to spring burning, including higher soil moisture and better shrub response. Soil moisture is an important factor in controlling duff consumption by the fire as well as protecting the roots of some of the more sensitive browse species such as bitterbrush. A fire burning

too hot has the potential to set the shrub species back and can actually be detrimental to the winter range.

Timber Harvest

Commercial timber harvest has been and continues to be a valuable tool for accomplishing objectives of the mitigation project. Timber harvest is used in areas with marketable understory trees and where objectives for mitigation can be met while providing wood fiber to the mills. It is important to recognize that rather than timber harvest driving the project, the roles are reversed and timber harvest is only used where it meets the objectives of mitigation. We have had mixed success with some sales because most of the trees we want to remove are small. This makes some timber harvests difficult to sell as the sale of small diameter logs is heavily dependant on current market prices of wood products. We will continue to use commercial timber harvest as a tool in the management of the winter ranges along Lake Koocanusa so long as they do not compromise the quality of the winter range. Timber harvest also provides an alternative source of funding for the prescribed fire through the use of timber sale receipts to help in post-enhancement treatment efforts. Another 220 acres of timber harvest are planned next year. We also anticipate a busy fall as the crews get back to the slashing of small, understory Douglas-fir in treatment units scattered along Lake Koocanusa.

If you would like more information about the wildlife habitat enhancement projects funded by wildlife mitigation dollars, contact Ron Komac at the Rexford Ranger District (296-2536), or Jenny Holifield at the Libby Ranger District (293-7773). ☺

Hungry Horse Dam Wildlife Mitigation Update

The Flathead National Forest has been involved since 1987 in projects to mitigate some of the wildlife habitat losses that occurred when Hungry Horse reservoir was filled. Over the last ten years, the Forest has conserved nearly 1,100 acres and enhanced over 1,000 acres of important wildlife habitat that help to compensate for the nearly 24,000 acres of habitat that were lost. The past year has brought one major wildlife habitat mitigation project near completion and initiated another significant project on the Forest.

Firefighter Mountain

The Firefighter Mountain Project on the Hungry Horse District, began in 1988, was designed to create and improve wildlife habitat in a dense lodgepole pine forest. The catastrophic fires of 1910 burned through large areas of forest including the Firefighter Mountain area. Literally thousands of lodgepole pine trees sprouted following that fire. The high density of trees eliminated understory vegetation that many wildlife species such as elk, deer, bears and birds depend upon for food and cover. The Firefighter project created over 1,000 acres of 5-25 acre openings in the lodgepole forest through commercial timber harvest, tree slash-

ing and prescribed fires. This year, logging slash from the last of the four timber harvest units were burned. Weather permitting, the remaining 118 acres will be burned in 1998. Many important wildlife plant species have been rejuvenated, providing necessary habitat not only for big game animals like elk and deer but also for migratory songbirds like the western tanager and mountain bluebird.

Crossover Mountain

Twenty-five miles up the South Fork of the Flathead River, on the Spotted Bear Ranger District lies Crossover Mountain. The open parks and meadows of this area provide one of the most important winter range areas for elk and mule deer in the entire South Fork drainage. Elk and mule deer rely on the grasses and shrubs of this range for food to carry them through the long winter months. The vegetation on this range is heavily used each year. A project was initiated by Forest Service wildlife biologists in 1996 to burn approximately 3,000 acres in varying sized patches over the next five years. This treatment will stimulate growth and vigor of shrubs and grasses. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has generously contributed \$3,500 to this project.

(Cont. on Page 7)

Libby Fisheries Mitigation Update

Mitigation Plan

The Libby Fisheries Mitigation plan will soon be released in final draft format for the public to review and provide further ideas and direction for the Libby Fisheries Mitigation program. The document incorporates comments from public meetings held in Libby and Eureka during 1995 and 1996. This document also combines comments from the two participating Native American tribes (The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and Kootenai Tribe of Idaho) who will participate in the administration of the mitigation program in the aboriginal Kootenai watershed.

Native fisheries habitat losses were quantified based on stream length and gradient of flooded habitats. Historic, pre-dam fish estimates from reservoir tributaries and the



Kootenai River were used to estimate the total number of native fish (westslope cutthroat trout and mountain whitefish) lost due to the filling of Koocanusa Reservoir. Further losses were quantified from the Kootenai River below Libby Dam. The loss of biodiversity is a well-documented phenomena below hydropower facilities and the Kootenai is no exception. A recently completed report documents the loss of aquatic macro invertebrate densities and species diversity below Libby Dam from 1980 to 1995. Fish have suffered with the tailwater-altered ecosystem as evidenced by the endangered Kootenai River white sturgeon, ling (burbot), kokanee, and westslope cutthroat trout. These fisheries losses and potential mitigation projects are listed in the final draft of the Libby Fisheries plan.

The plan follows the Hungry Horse Mitigation program, that was approved by the Northwest Power Planning Council in 1992. This program quantified losses of fisheries resources in the Flathead basin due to construction and operation of Hungry Horse Dam.

Lake Improvements

Libby Mitigation pilot habitat enhancement projects have begun with several lake rehabilitation and stream

bank stabilization projects. Carpenter Lake, near Eureka, was proposed to be rehabilitated this fall by killing the stunted, illegally introduced bluegill, yellow perch, northern pike and largemouth bass and restock with native westslope cutthroat trout and rainbow trout. Due to over 200 comments from the public received by FWP Libby Fisheries Mitigation, the rehabilitation will occur next fall after limits can be lifted and some of the fish can be relocated to nearby lakes. This will also give fish managers time to locate catchable sized trout to restock into the lake in the spring of 1999. Three lakes in the Thompson Chain (Bootjack, Topless and Cibid) are scheduled for rehabilitation this fall to remove illegally introduced species and restock with native westslope cutthroat trout.

Stream Projects

Pilot streambank stabilization projects are ongoing in the Bobtail, Pipe and Libby Creeks. Bobtail Creek is especially exciting, as a grassroots group has been organized involving all landowners on the creek. With Libby Mitigation expertise, this group is developing a watershed-based approach to stream restoration. This plan includes a comprehensive stream restoration project on approximately 1.5 miles of stream reach at the head of the drainage. A conservation easement is being addressed with the landowner of this property to ensure that the investment in habitat restoration is guaranteed for future generations. A streambank fencing project is planned on approximately 1,400 feet of stream to exclude livestock and allow the restoration of the riparian vegetation community. Bobtail historically had native gamefish — westslope cutthroat and bull trout — which are currently limited to the headwaters. A migrating run of rainbow trout from the Kootenai river currently uses Bobtail Creek in the lower reaches. The objectives of this watershed-based approach to native species recovery in Bobtail Creek include reducing sediment loading from lateral streambank migration, restoring approximately 8,000 feet of stream and enhancing the habitat throughout the drainage.

Hungry Horse Dam Wildlife Mitigation Update

(Cont. from Page 6)

Red Bench

Another project was recently initiated on the Glacier View Ranger District. The Red Bench fire burned approximately 5,500 acres of Forest Service land in the Spruce Creek drainage in 1988. As occurs in many northwestern Montana landscapes, lodgepole pine seedlings have invaded the burn site by the thousands, in some spots as thick as 10,000 trees per acre. Important grasses, forbs and shrubs are being eliminated by the dense tree growth. To improve habitat structure and forage production for elk, deer, bears, and other wildlife species, we began thinning these seedlings this summer. Small, scattered openings of approximately one acre will be cleared of all trees, allowing other

vegetation to flourish. Other areas will be thinned, allowing the remaining trees to grow. Thinned areas will provide improved forage because of the increased sunlight to the forest floor, more complex forest structure, as well as timber for future harvest. Several of these thinned areas will be strategically located to provide fuel breaks to lower wildfire spread in the future. Approximately 225-250 acres per year are scheduled for treatment over each of the next five years. Treating the area while the trees are small dramatically improves the cost effectiveness of this project.

If you would like more information about the wildlife habitat enhancement projects funded by wildlife mitigation dollars, contact Rod Hickle at the Hungry Horse Ranger District, Flathead National Forest (387-5243).

Hooked on Fishing Program Adopted by 29 Classes in Northwest Montana Schools

After starting with one fourth grade classroom at Evergreen Elementary last year, the national "Hooked on Fishing, Not on Drugs" program has expanded to 29 classrooms in 21 northwest Montana schools. The program is also being adopted in other schools across Montana.

A big part of the expansion is credited to the success of the pilot program at Evergreen by fourth grade teacher Judy Sander. Sander has been a big booster for Hooked on Fishing because of its emphasis on hands on, experiential learning.

Sander recently received an award from Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks recognizing her for her efforts and creativity involving the Hooked on Fishing Program.

The program emphasizes fish biology and identification, water habitat, responsible and safe fishing, fishing regulations, and other topics. Students take part in math, science, writ-

ing and other activities related to the program. In addition, students take part in 3-5 outdoor fishing field trips and aquatic sampling field trips.

For more information on the program contact FWP at 752-5501, or call Judy Sander at Evergreen Elementary at 752-1347. 



HOOKED ON FISHING. Evergreen fourth grade teacher Judy Sander received a special award of merit for her work involving the national "Hooked on Fishing, Not on Drugs" program.



For more information on Fish, Wildlife & Parks issues, listen to:
"Northwest Outdoors,"

FWP's weekly radio show, Thursdays at 8:35 a.m.
on KGEZ, 600 AM.

INSIDE TRACKS is published by Region One



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